

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 AID-05 EB-07 OES-03 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1677

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 3570

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, NG

SUBJ: NIAMEY CONFERENCE ON URANIUM EXPLOITATION AND
DEVELOPMENT

PARIS FOR MELONE

REF: STATE 211707 (NOTAL)

1. LETTER TO ESSO EASTERN FROM GON INVITING REPRESENTATIVES
OF COMPANIES INTERESTED IN URANIUM EXPLOITATION
IN NIGER TO SEPTEMBER 26 MEETING IS GON INITIATIVE WHICH
HAS BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION WITHIN GOVERNMENT FOR SOME
TIME. HOWEVER, LETTER IS FIRST INDICATION WE HAVE
RECEIVED THAT MATTER HAS SURFACED AND GON HAS DECIDED
ON DEFINITE COURSE OF ACTION ON THIS SUBJECT.

2. ACCORDING TO WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PIECE TOGETHER,
GON IS PLANNING LOCAL CONFERENCE FROM SEPTEMBER 23 -
26 TO DISCUSS POLICIES CONCERNING URANIUM EXPLOITATION.

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IN ADDITION TO COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES, WE UNDERSTAND

OBSERVERS FROM SUCH ORGANIZATIONS AS FED, WORLD BANK, AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK BEING INVITED. CONFERENCE WILL BE CLIMAXED ON SEPTEMBER 26 BY MEETING, AS PROPOSED IN LETTER TO ESSO EASTERN, WHICH WILL BE ADDRESSED BY PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE. KOUNTCHE'S PRESENTATION IS EXPECTED TO INCLUDE FOLLOWING TWO POINTS:

A) HE WILL REASSURE FOREIGN COMPANIES THAT RECENT CHANGES IN MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT AND MINERALS DISMISSAL AND ARREST OF FORMER MINISTER SANI SIDO DO NOT REPRESENT CHANGE IN GON POLICIES TOWARD FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND ROLE OF FOREIGN COMPANIES IN DEVELOPMENT AND THAT GON CONTINUES TO ADHERE TO ALL AGREEMENTS ON URANIUM DEVELOPMENT ENTERED INTO WITH THESE COMPANIES. THIS MESSAGE IS EXPECTED TO BE BASICALLY SAME AS THAT HE CONVEYED TO TEXACO AND CONOCO REPS AUGUST 21 (NIAMEY 3333).

B) HE WILL SUGGEST LINKAGE BETWEEN URANIUM EXPLOITATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF REGION IN WHICH URANIUM LOCATED. MOST SPECIFICALLY, THIS ASSISTANCE TO BE CONSTRUCTION OF HARD SURFACE ROAD FROM TAHOUA TO ARLIT VIA AGADEZ.

3. AT PRESENT, NIGER'S SOUTHERN TOWNS AND TAHOUA ARE LINKED BY GOOD SURFACED ROADS (EXCEPT FOR SHORT STRIPS WHICH ARE ON VERGE OF COMPLETING). HOWEVER, ROAD FROM TAHOUA TO AGADEZ AND ARLIT IS IN TERRIBLE CONDITION DURING MOST OF YEAR AND IMPASSABLE FOR DAYS DURING RAINY SEASON. THIS POSES MAJOR COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEM FOR GON IN MEETING FOOD DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS OF NORTHERN REGIONS AND IN PROVIDING URANIUM COMPANIES IN ARLIT AREA WITH MEANS TO IMPORT ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES, INCLUDING FUEL, AS WELL AS TO EXPORT MINED PRODUCT. THIS STRIP OF ROAD ALSO SEEN AS VITAL LINK IN TRANS-SAHARAN NORTH-SOUTH ROAD WHICH GON HOPES WILL WITHIN NEXT FIVE YEARS JOIN WITH ROAD ALGERIANS ARE BUILDING FROM IN-SALAH AND TAMANRASSET TO NIGER BORDER.

4. IN SHORT, AT SEPTEMBER 26 MEETING COMPANY REPS
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CAN EXPECT TO BE TOLD THAT BOTH NIGER AND COMPANIES NEED EACH OTHER, THAT BOTH WILL BENEFIT FROM CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD AND FINALLY THAT GON IS PREPARED GUARANTEE COMPANIES (AND COUNTRIES THEY REPRESENT) ASSURED SUPPLY OF URANIUM IN RETURN FOR COMPANIES' ASSURANCES THAT THEY WILL CONTRIBUTE IN THIS MANNER TO NIGER'S DEVELOPMENT. SEVERAL YEARS AGO COST OF TAHOUA-ARLIT ROAD WAS ESTIMATED BY FRENCH

AT ABOUT 25 BILLION CFA. COSTS BY NOW PROBABLY HAVE
INCREASED BY ANOTHER 10 MILLION CFA. COMMENT:
AS FRENCH AMBASSADOR GASCHIGNARD (PROTDIT)
COMMENTED THIS REASSURANCE COULD ALSO BE CALLED
BLACKMAIL. END COMMENT.

5. WE HAVE BEEN RELIABLY INFORMED THAT GON ALSO
ENVISAGES BRINGING FOREIGN DONORS INTO THIS
EXERCISE THEREBY ESTABLISHING LINKAGE IMPLIED IN
LETTER TO ESSO EASTERN (REFTEL). NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS
TO BE DONE AT SEPTEMBER 26 MEETING OR SUBSEQUENTLY.
ACCORDING OUR INFORMATION COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE
COMPANIES INVOLVED IN URANIUM EXPLOITATION ARE FRANCE,
US, JAPAN, GERMANY, BELGIUM, ITALY AND POSSIBLY
SPAIN. FRANCE HAS BY FAR LARGEST PARTICIPATION.

6. COINCIDENTALLY, PRESIDENT BONGO OF GABON MADE
BRIEF TRANSIT STOP NIAMEY SEPTEMBER 7. HE TOLD
PRESS AT AIRPORT HE WAS IN FULL SYMPATHY
WITH PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE'S RECENT PROPOSAL TO FORM
COMMITTEE OF URANIUM PRODUCING COUNTRIES.

7. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH REPEAT THIS MESSAGE AND
REFTEL TO LONDON, TOKYO, BRUSSELS, ROME, MADRID AND
BONN.HECK

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